

catching
readers grade **K**

DAY-BY-DAY SMALL-GROUP READING INTERVENTIONS

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Foreword

I began my teaching career as a first-grade teacher in Key West, Florida, in 1965. Much has changed since then in the world and in the world of school. But reading Barbara Taylor's books made me realize how much is still the same. My class of thirty-five children contained nine children—two girls and seven boys—who were (in the lingo of the day) "not ready." In those days, basal reading series for first grade had a readiness book that I was very grateful to find. I grouped these nine students together and we made our way through the workbook pages. The pages were mostly practice with letter names and auditory discrimination—the precursor of phonemic awareness. Six weeks into the school year, we finished the readiness book and I administered the Metropolitan Readiness Test to my students. For three days, I tried to keep them focused on the correct lines and asked them to underline the letter *b*, put an *x* on the picture that began like *paint*, and circle the picture of the object that rhymed with *cat*. I took all these booklets home and spent a miserable weekend grading them. As I made my way through the test booklets, I adopted a "benefit of the doubt" scoring system. "Two red marks on this line, none on the next. If the second mark is on the next line, it would be right. I'm counting it correct." In spite of my lenient scoring, scores for eight of the nine children indicated they were still "not ready." I spent a sleepless Sunday night wondering what I was to do with these children who were clearly not ready when I had used up all the readiness materials! Lacking any alternative, I started them in the first pre-primer and we plodded our way through the books. By the end of the year, only one of these students could read fluently at primer level.

If Barbara had written her books 45 years earlier (when she was probably in kindergarten), I think I could have transformed my "not ready" kids into fluent readers. Based on many years of research in real classrooms with real teachers and kids, Barbara has created a workable system for providing struggling readers in grades K–5 with the targeted intervention they need to become fluent readers. At the heart of Early Intervention in Reading (EIR) is the addition of a second reading lesson in a small-group setting. Unlike many interventions, struggling readers get this second reading lesson *in addition to* all the rich classroom instruction and *in* the classroom—not in some room down the hall. With details, specifics, and examples that only someone who has spent many hours in the classroom could know, Barbara guides you step-by-step as you organize for and provide effective EIR instruction. As you read through the book, your brain races with questions:

- ▶ "How do I fit an additional intervention group lesson into my daily schedule?"
- ▶ "What books work best for these lessons?"
- ▶ "How can I provide all the instruction struggling readers need in 20 minutes?"
- ▶ "What does the coaching for decoding and comprehension look like and sound like?"

- ▶ “How do I wean them off my coaching and move them toward independence?”
- ▶ “How do I provide worthwhile independent activities for the students I am not working with?”

Because Barbara has worked in so many classrooms coaching teachers who are implementing EIR, she can provide practical, classroom-tested answers to all your questions. She invites you into the classrooms of real teachers and you get to hear them describing how they organize and problem solve. In addition to the printed resource, you can go to the video clips on the DVD to “See It in Action.” As you watch real teachers move through the three-day lesson sequence, you realize that, while it is complex, Barbara provides all the resources you need to make it work in your classrooms with your students who struggle.

Once you see how EIR works in your classroom, you will probably want to spread the word. Not to worry! Barbara is right there supporting you. In the final chapter, “Creating an EIR Community,” she provides a detailed, month-by-month plan for organizing a group of colleagues to learn together how to better meet the needs of struggling readers.

So, if they ever invent a time machine that could transport me back to 1965, with the help of Barbara Taylor’s books, I know I could teach all my “not ready” kids to read!

Patricia M. Cunningham
Wake Forest University

Acknowledgments



This book is the result of fifteen years of collaboration with many kindergarten teachers and colleagues across the United States. I want to thank them all for their invaluable contributions to this book.

Inspired by Reading Recovery, I developed the Early Intervention in Reading (EIR) process in the late 1980s to help first-grade teachers help their at-risk readers succeed in reading through daily, small-group, reading intervention lessons. I have refined the EIR process over the years by visiting many classrooms and learning from many teachers and their students. Without this opportunity, I would not have been able to modify and improve the EIR teaching strategies and professional learning practices described in this book.

I also want to thank the hundreds of kindergarten teachers I have visited and learned from over the past ten years through my work on effective reading instruction and schoolwide reading improvement. I especially want to thank the exemplary teachers who have contributed so much to the book by sharing their thoughts and lessons related to effective reading instruction.

I owe a special thanks and a debt of gratitude to my colleague, Ceil Critchely, a master teacher who has been instrumental in helping teachers succeed with EIR through the phenomenal professional learning support she has provided to them over the past twelve years. I know that without Ceil's expert guidance, teachers would not have been as successful as they have been in helping their at-risk readers learn to read well in first grade.

I also want to thank my academic colleagues for their support and feedback. In particular, I want to recognize my good friends, Kathy Au and Taffy Raphael, who have gently nudged me over the years to publish my work on EIR in a form readily accessible to teachers.

I want to thank the many people at Heinemann who have made this book possible. Thanks to Patty Adams, my production editor, for her top-notch work on a complex project within a challenging time frame. Whenever I called with questions or concerns, she responded cheerfully and promptly. Many others at Heinemann have also contributed to this book and I thank them for their efforts.

It is my sincere hope that kindergarten teachers will find this book useful as they strive to teach students who come to them a little behind in the fall to be confident, successful, readers by the end of the school year. Thanks to all kindergarten teachers reading this book for the important work you do for our children!

Barbara M. Taylor
University of Minnesota

Introduction

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We are a culture of quick fixes. We promise mastery in ten easy lessons, instant success, overnight sensations. Go to a bookstore and whether you stand and gaze at the brightly colored covers in the business, health, or education section, the answer to our every need is couched in words like *speedy*, *easy*, and *seven easy steps*.

In such a culture, a lot of alarm bells go off when a teacher faces a five-year-old child in kindergarten who is behind in emergent reading abilities. *Catching Readers, Grade K*, is one book in a series of five, dedicated to giving the regular classroom teacher what's needed to reach and teach that five-year-old with a concrete plan rather than a frantic pull-out program or a misguided label. Each book in the series offers teacher-friendly, research-proven background and lessons for young readers who need an extra boost.

The intervention model brings reading success to children in a five-day lesson cycle, which I know sounds as though I'm playing into the same glib promises of swift solutions. I state it here as a way to express that it is a five-day format used across a school year with deep roots—more than fifteen years of classroom testing. I emphasize the “five-day” repetition of the lessons to make it clear that we don't have to choose to run around in circles looking for some new complicated program for reaching at-risk readers. We know what to do. When we're true to children's developmental levels, know which books to put in their hands, and provide effective instruction, a lot of good things fall into place. The key is to focus on the children and the practices we know help them to read at each grade level.

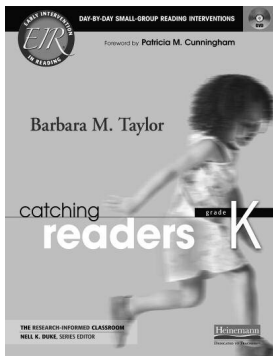


In fact, the intervention model I offer stands in opposition to approaches and programs that think the answer to helping K–5 below-grade-level readers achieve is to provide remediation. Above-grade-level, on-grade-level, and below-grade-level readers all need the same thing: sound teaching techniques and developmentally appropriate practices that meet their needs and provide intellectual challenge to all.

Here’s an overview of how the interventions are unique and yet similar for each grade level, so you can see the developmentally based, purposeful overlap in the series. The intervention gives teachers, staff developers, principals, and reading coaches a predictable model so that schoolwide coherence is easier to attain. All grade-level models stress word-recognition proficiency, high-level comprehension, vocabulary development, and strategic reading. Unique components of the various grade-specific models are described below:

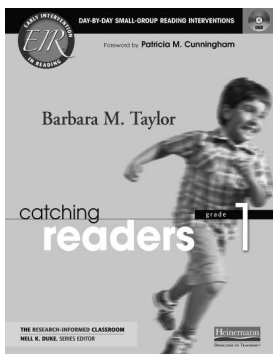
Kindergarten

The daily 10-minute supplemental lessons for kindergarten focus on developing all children’s oral language, phonemic awareness, and emergent literacy abilities through literature-based activities. The goal is for all students to leave kindergarten with the skills they need to learn to read in first grade. The more capable children, as they respond to the various activities in EIR lessons, serve as models for the children who are less skilled in oral language and emergent literacy abilities. Less-skilled children who need more support return to some of the story discussion questions and phonemic awareness/emergent literacy activities for an additional 10 minutes a day.



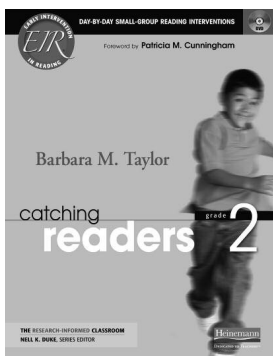
First Grade

First-grade children who start the school year with lower-than-average phonemic awareness abilities and letter-sound knowledge will benefit from EIR lessons. The teacher focuses on accelerating students’ literacy learning by deliberately coaching them to use strategies to decode words as they read, to actively engage in word work, and to think at a higher level about the meaning of the texts they are reading.



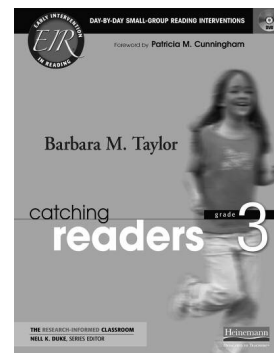
Second Grade

Second-grade readers who can’t read a book at a first-grade level at the start of second grade will benefit from the basic EIR routine. The intervention begins with first-grade books and routines of the grade 1 EIR model and then moves into second-grade books a few months later. There is also an accelerated grade 2 routine designed for students who come to second grade as independent readers but who will need additional support to be reading on grade level by the end of the school year.



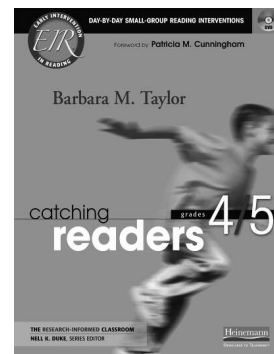
Third Grade

The grade 3 EIR routine is for children who are reading below grade level when they enter third grade. In the grade 3 EIR model, the focus is on refining students' decoding of multisyllabic words, improving their fluency, developing their vocabulary, and enhancing their comprehension of narrative and informational texts. Ideally, the grade 3 EIR model is done within the context of a cross-age tutoring program in which the third-grade students read to and also tutor first-grade EIR students. The third graders are working on their reading for more than "catching up because they are behind." They look forward to and enjoy working with their younger student who needs additional support in reading.



Fourth/Fifth Grade

The EIR routine for fourth and fifth grade is for children who are reading below grade level at the beginning of the school year. Although students receive support in attacking multisyllabic words and developing reading fluency, the grade 4/5 model focuses on improving students' comprehension of informational text through the use of comprehension strategies, discussion of vocabulary, and engagement in high-level talk and writing about texts. Ideally, the grade 4/5 EIR model is done within the context of a motivating cross-age tutoring program in which fourth and fifth graders read to and also tutor second or third graders.



Getting Good at It: Different Ways to Use This Book

This book—and by extension all the books in this series—is designed to be used by the individual teacher, a pair or group of teachers, or as part of a schoolwide professional development plan. Here are components that support collaborative learning:

Video Clips for Individual Viewing

As you read about the recurring cycle of EIR routines, I encourage you to watch the video clips that illustrate what is being covered in the text. Many teachers have told me that seeing the EIR routines being applied in the classroom makes it easy to start teaching the EIR lessons. See this icon throughout the book for easy access to the video clips and teaching resources on the DVD.



Guidance for Monthly Sessions with Colleagues

In the last chapter, "Creating an EIR Community," I share a model for a professional learning community (PLC) that works. Over my many years of working with teachers on effective reading instruction generally, and EIR lessons specif-

ically, I have learned from teachers' comments that the collaborative nature of learning new instructional techniques with colleagues leads to excellent understanding, reflection, and success.

Website Support

For additional support, go to www.Heinemann.com and search by Taylor or *Catching Readers*. Also visit www.earlyinterventioninreading.com to learn more about the availability of additional support from an EIR expert.

We can help so many children become successful readers when we offer excellent reading instruction and provide effective interventions to those students who require additional reading support within their classroom setting. I am excited to have the opportunity to offer my *Catching Readers* series of books to you. Thank you for the important work you do for our children!



What Does Effective Reading Instruction for Kindergartners Look Like?

Kindergarten is an important year in children's developing literacy. Kindergarten teachers meet a dramatic range of students in the fall, from the child who knows only a few letters of the alphabet to the child who walks in on the first day already a reader. It takes years for kindergarten teachers to hone their expertise to meet the needs of their emergent readers, teaching them beginning reading skills and getting them ready to become independent readers in first grade (or in some cases teaching them to read before they enter first grade). This book and the companion video clips and teacher resources on the DVD will help teachers arrive at this level of effectiveness sooner.



My career as a researcher and teacher educator has been dedicated to studying and describing components of effective literacy instruction so that teachers can become more intentional in their teaching and more confident in their interactions with children during all the aspects of reading instruction. Through this book, my goal is for you to be able to teach efficient, effective whole-group emergent reading lessons as well as follow-up small-group reading lessons for young children who struggle with reading. I will also show you how emergent reading lessons and intervention work to connect and inform all the rich literacy practices that occur within a balanced literacy framework.

How the Early Intervention in Reading Model Sits Within Effective Reading Instruction

The emergent literacy lessons featured in this book are based on EIR[®], which is a set of teaching practices I developed that incorporates the characteristics of effective reading instruction (see page 3). EIR has been used in schools for almost twenty years and can easily become the conduit for implementing response to intervention (RTI) or differentiated instruction. Early Intervention in Reading provides:

- ▶ kindergartners who are struggling with emergent reading activities an additional daily opportunity to interact with text in a structured, consistent, and comfortable small-group setting
- ▶ kindergarten teachers with a repetitive, clear structure that can help them provide a sound scope and sequence of emergent literacy lessons, as well as follow-up support for children who need more coaching in order to catch up or keep up with grade-level expectations
- ▶ teachers and schools an intervention model that isn't stigmatizing for children because it uses authentic literature and practices, and takes place within the regular classroom—and usually by the classroom teacher

I developed this model because I don't believe kindergartners should be pulled out of the classroom for extra help. Rather, all teachers need to work together so that all children get a good start in reading. Supplemental instruction for those who are struggling can't be something only specialized reading teachers know about.

Through structured 10- or 15-minute whole-class lessons and 10-minute follow-up lessons, all students receive effective emergent reading instruction and struggling readers receive an extra dose of it. When you as their regular classroom teacher adapt lessons and support based on each student's needs, progress is accelerated. And, knowing that this is a model that has decades of research and practice behind it, you are more likely to commit to using it consistently; seeing your students make striking gains is highly motivating. We'll look at the weekly lesson activities in detail later in the book, but first, here's a glimpse of how these lessons extend and amplify the effective reading instruction you provide to all your students.

How EIR Meets the Requirements of Effective Reading Instruction

	Effective Reading Instruction	EIR Lessons
What You Teach (Content)	Explicit phonemic awareness	Listening for sounds in words, blending sounds to make words, working with sound boxes, and writing letters representing sounds into words in sentences
	Explicit systematic phonics	Learning and reviewing letter names and practice letter-sound recognition, working with sound boxes, writing letters representing sounds into words in sentences, and working with word families
	Concepts of print	Modeling how to track, tracking while “reading” simple texts many times over
	Text-based vocabulary and concepts	Discussing word meanings and concepts at the point they are encountered
	Comprehension, in the context of high-level talk about text	Regularly and actively talking about texts
	Comprehension strategies	Summarizing stories and informational text
How You Teach (Pedagogy)	Apply taught skills and strategies to text	Applying taught skills and strategies to text
	Differentiate instruction	Supporting individual students based on need
	Balance teaching directly and providing support	Coaching students as they use skills and strategies while working on phonemic awareness, decoding, writing, and reading and discussing stories
	Teach with a clear purpose and good timing	Stating the purpose of each 10- or 15-minute lesson clearly and routinely, then presenting it efficiently
	Actively engage students	Listening, writing, talking, and sharing with a partner, and working with words
	Engage students in challenging, motivating learning activities	Listening to engaging, well-written stories that motivate them to think
	Develop independent learners	Keeping high expectations, releasing responsibility to students as they work together on their own
	Motivate	Offering praise and helpful feedback as you demonstrate enthusiasm for learning
Professional Learning	Collaborative learning with a focus on practice	In monthly learning meetings, discuss EIR strategies, successes, and challenges with your colleagues

Which Children Need the Intervention and What Is the End Goal

EIR lessons benefit all kindergartners and especially those who have relatively weak letter-name and letter-sound knowledge and phonemic awareness. These students are likely to struggle with reading in first grade. The strategies are effective within the context of many types of regular reading programs (e.g., basal, whole language, reading and writing workshop, systematic phonics). In Chapter 5, I describe assessments you can use to determine which students might benefit from EIR.

Does the Intervention Work?



Three research studies have shown that students who participated in EIR in kindergarten had higher phonemic awareness scores in the spring than comparable students who did not receive early intervention (see the research section of the DVD). Looking at twenty-four schools (Taylor 2001), I found that the 700 kindergarten students who participated in EIR lessons had a mean phonemic awareness score of 7 in May. My earlier research (Taylor 1991) showed that kindergartners who score 6 or higher on this test are likely to succeed in learning to read in grade 1.

A Brief Review of How Children Learn to Read

To most effectively help struggling readers learn how to read, you need to have a clear model of what children are learning to do. The following elements discussed tend to be the ones struggling beginning readers have the most trouble internalizing.

The Role of Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness, or the ability to hear the sounds in words and to blend those sounds together, is one of the two best predictors of reading achievement by the end of first grade. Adams (1990), the National Reading Panel (2000), and Snow et al. (1998) have shown that children who come to first grade with low phonemic awareness are at considerable risk of failing to learn to read in first grade. (The other predictor is whether children know the names of letters. However, simply teaching children the letter names in kindergarten and first grade does *not* have a big impact on their May reading achievement.) Fortunately, kindergarten interventions, as well as interventions in early first grade, can make a big difference in accelerating children's phonemic awareness and hence impact their reading achievement.

Phonemic awareness is an auditory skill. Segmenting sounds, blending sounds, hearing alliteration, and recognizing rhymes are all measures of phonemic awareness. However, the two measures most predictive of end-of-first-grade reading achievement are the ability to segment phonemes (for example, separate the sounds in the word *cat* into /c/ /a/ /t/) and blend phonemes (combine the sounds /c/ /a/ /t/ into the word *cat*) (Adams 1990; NRP 2000; Snow et al. 1998).

Partial Decoding and Grasping the Alphabetic Principle

Children begin reading by partially decoding words and using context cues. They typically start using the first letter to sound out a word but cannot get all the way through a word. Beginning readers sometimes overrely on context to figure out words. The downward arrows in Figure 1–1 represent the “aha” moment when children finally understand the alphabetic principle, or how to sound out words. When they get to this point, they understand that within a printed word there are letters that represent phonemes (sounds) that have to be voiced separately and blended together to become a word. Adults often fail to realize just how challenging this understanding is for children to develop. But many children come to first grade not knowing what makes up a printed word and not knowing what the sounds are in a given word (this isn’t too surprising; they have never needed to know about the separate sounds in words before).

Because the alphabetic principle seems a simple concept to us now, we adults think that if we explain it, children should catch on quickly. Most first graders (and some kindergartners) do grasp the alphabetic principle fairly quickly in the fall and their reading ability soars. Unfortunately, most children who need EIR lessons don’t fully grasp the alphabetic principle until January or February of first grade, and once they do, their ability to decode improves slowly. Some children receiving EIR—about one-third—don’t grasp the

Stages of Word Recognition Development

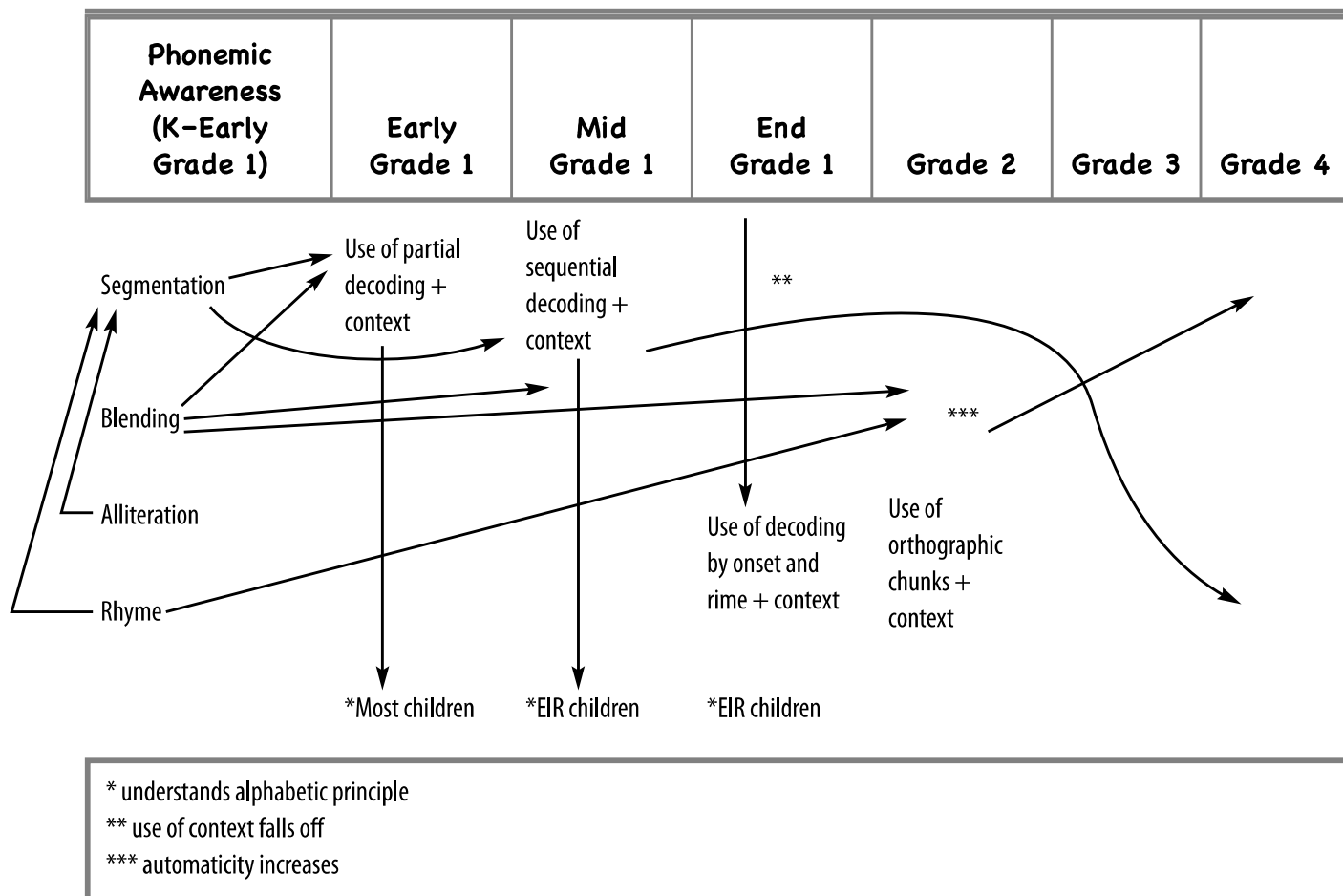


Figure 1–1 Stages of Word Recognition Development

alphabetic principle until April or May. Over the years I've come to accept this slower development. We need to be patient, believe in the children, and keep working with them. I am always impressed with the incredible patience demonstrated by the teachers I visit who are using these strategies with their struggling readers.

Learning How to Decode Letter by Letter and by Onset and Rime

EIR instruction emphasizes teaching children to use word-recognition strategies on their own. Sequential letter-by-letter decoding is only one of those strategies, but it is one that is very important to becoming an independent reader. When children come to the word *pig*, they need to be able to sound out each letter, /p/ /i/ /g/, and blend the sounds together into *pig*. Teachers begin to work on sequential letter-by-letter decoding with students in kindergarten, and first-grade teachers need to model and coach the strategy repeatedly.

Students can decode by onset and rime—the initial sound and the phonogram that completes the word: /f/ /ind/, *find*—when prompted to do so, and teachers begin to model this in kindergarten. However, students do not decode by onset and rime independently until they understand sequential letter-by-letter decoding. (See “A Brief Review of Research on the Learning-to-Read Process,” Taylor 1998, on the DVD.)



As children start to “glue to the print” (pay attention to the sequence of letters), they rely much less on context to help them decode words. Reminding children to think about what would make sense in the story as they are sounding out words makes it easier for them to come up with the correct word.

By the end of first grade and early into second grade, decoding by onset and rime becomes children's preferred decoding strategy, because recognizing a chunk (e.g., phonogram) is quicker than sequential letter-by-letter decoding (Taylor 1998).

Developing Automaticity

The goal in teaching children to recognize words is that they eventually are able to do so automatically. By second grade and into third grade, children are reading most words on sight. This doesn't mean we have to drill them in this; while reading for meaning, children automatically recognize specific words because of repeated exposure to them.

In time children recognize most words automatically and no longer depend on context to help them. Of course, they will come across words that they have never seen before, but for the most part, by fourth grade, students typically read with context-free, automatic word recognition.

The Role of Comprehension and Vocabulary

Since the purpose of reading is to gain meaning from the text, it is important to stress both comprehension and vocabulary with emerging readers. Too often,

especially with struggling readers, instruction emphasizes breaking the code and neglects reading for meaning. We need to keep in mind that decoding improves as comprehension improves and trust the interconnectedness of these two processes. Effective kindergarten teachers, as we see in the lessons of Choua Zhang, Stan Wolff, and Lena Jacobson in Chapter 2, emphasize reading for meaning and enjoyment. In EIR lessons, teachers also stress comprehension by including it every day in whole-group and small-group follow-up lessons.

The What and How of Good Kindergarten Teaching

EIR was developed with key elements of content (the what) and pedagogy (the how) as its foundation. Effective teachers are aware, day to day, of both content and pedagogy. Having a good grasp of the content and pedagogy of effective reading instruction will inform your practice and help you make day-to-day decisions about your reading lessons. In turn, these effective practices will help your students develop into motivated, competent readers.

In Chapter 2 you will meet three teachers—Choua Zhang, Stan Wolff, and Lena Jacobson—who demonstrate what effective teaching looks like in urban, suburban, and rural settings. You'll gain a sense of how these teachers connect EIR lessons to their overall reading instruction. These three teachers not only teach these specialized lessons but also provide effective reading instruction to all their students and see excellent growth in their students' reading abilities during each school year.

Content: Four Dimensions Young Children Need

Effective elementary school reading instruction has many dimensions, all of which develop the abilities students need to become competent readers. The main dimensions are:

- ▶ word-recognition development (including phonemic awareness and phonics)
- ▶ fluency development (once students are independent readers)
- ▶ vocabulary development
- ▶ comprehension development

Do these elements alone lead children to become successful, engaged readers? No, but these are the nonnegotiable aspects of teaching reading. Without them, all the other practices—from reading picture books aloud to independent reading—will not have a sufficient foundation.

Word-Recognition Development

Most students, especially those in kindergarten and first grade, benefit from systematic, explicit instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics (Adams 1990; National Reading Panel [NRP] 2000; Snow et al. 1998). Teaching students in kindergarten and in the fall of first grade to hear the sounds in words and blend these sounds into words are the most important aspects of phonemic awareness for learning to read. However, you do not need to overdo this instruction. Between fifteen and eighteen hours total in kindergarten is sufficient (NRP 2000).

A number of approaches to systematic phonics instruction are effective, including letter-by-letter decoding and decoding by onset and rime (Christensen and Bowey 2005; Juel and Minden-Cupp 2000; Mathes et al. 2005; NRP 2000). Coaching students to use word-recognition strategies as they read stories and informational texts is another important aspect of decoding instruction. For example, in the next chapter, teacher Stan Wolff talks to a small group of above-average readers about sounding out *dig* letter-by-letter as they read from a leveled text.

Fluency Development

Developing *fluency*, or reading at a good rate with appropriate phrasing, is important, because fluent reading supports comprehension. When students receive guidance or support during oral reading, the impact on students' reading abilities is significant (Kuhn and Stahl 2003). Procedures to build fluency include repeated reading and coached reading, as well as ample opportunities to read just-right books. Effective reading instruction weaves the practice of fluency into whole-group and small-group lessons and independent work. In kindergarten, teachers can help emergent readers focus on rereading predictable texts with good fluency, phrasing, and expression.

Vocabulary Development

Taking a variety of approaches toward developing students' vocabulary is critical (Baumann and Kame'enui 2004; Blachowicz and Fisher 2000; Graves 2007). The approaches include:

- ▶ teaching specific words through direct instruction
- ▶ providing word instruction prior to reading
- ▶ teaching strategies for determining word meanings
- ▶ exposing students to words in rich contexts through read-alouds and by encouraging them to read widely
- ▶ studying words that children will find useful in many contexts (Beck et al. 2002)

Three points are worth emphasizing. First, some words need to be introduced before reading so that students are not confused about a major aspect of a story. When Lena Jacobson introduces an informational text about penguins

that need to be rescued from an oil spill, she talks about the meaning of *rescue* before they listen to the text. She models making a connection to the word by sharing a time someone rescued her when she was a child, then has students share with a partner a time they rescued someone or something or were themselves rescued.

Second, teachers sometimes provide insufficient vocabulary instruction *during* the reading of a story. Beck and colleagues (2002) stress the value of teaching many word meanings at the point they are encountered in the text. When Lena reads the first page of the book about penguins, she stops briefly to tell students what oil is and to have them share ideas about why oil might kill penguins.

Third, developing students' interest in words is also important. You can model this interest in word meanings and enthusiasm for authors' word choice in a variety of ways, and it's a boon to students' reading and writing. For example, after Lena has read *Hattie and the Fox* (Fox 1986) and they discuss the meaning of "Goodness gracious me," students have fun repeating this phrase expressively when they share something they are surprised about: "Goodness gracious me, I see [*a dinosaur in the yard*] [*a blue bunny across the street*]."

Comprehension Development

Skilled readers use strategies as they read to enhance their comprehension. Researchers have shown that instruction in comprehension strategies improves students' ability to understand what they read (Foorman et al. 2006; Guthrie et al. 2000; NRP 2000). Explicit lessons in the following strategies are most effective: summarizing; monitoring comprehension; using graphic and semantic organizers before, during, and after reading; using story structure; and generating and answering questions. Also, using a number of instructional strategies, like reciprocal teaching, in naturalistic contexts is important (Guthrie et al. 2004; Klingner et al. 2004; NRP 2000; Pressley 2006). The classroom examples in Chapter 2 include instruction in summarizing a story, summarizing information text, and asking and answering questions. After reading about animals taking care of their young, Choua Zhang asks questions that prompt her students to summarize the big ideas ("Mothers keep their babies clean; mothers watch their babies as they sleep").

Teaching students how to engage in high-level talk and writing about text is another vital aspect of comprehension instruction (Knapp 1995; McKeown et al. 2009; Saunders and Goldenberg 1999; Taylor et al. 2003; Van den Branden 2000). For example, after reading *The Little Red Hen* in an EIR whole-group lesson, Stan asks students what the author's message is. Students quickly offer ideas such as, "You should help other people. You should be nice and help out."

Reflecting on the author's message or big ideas in a text allow readers to understand the story at a deeper level than simply recalling story events. Kindergartners are often much more capable of high-level talk than teachers realize, and can make remarkable connections with and inferences and statements about a story's big ideas and the motivations of its characters.

Pedagogy: The Art of Teaching Demystified

With these content elements under our belt, let's turn to the *how* behind the *what*: the essential pedagogy behind EIR lessons and all effective teaching. We know good teaching when we see it, and yet it can be hard to capture all the nuances in the confines of a book. In short, it's all the routines and practices a teacher uses, as well as the ability to respond in the moment to students' needs and to connect to students so they feel motivated to learn. Techniques include clearly stating lesson purposes, impromptu coaching, and making decisions about timing (e.g., how long to spend on a particular aspect of a lesson) or what texts and tasks to use to engage students in purposeful learning activities. As you read the characteristics that follow, think about your kindergarten students and how you view yourself in relation to these aspects of effective teaching.

Affective dimensions and people skills are other important aspects of pedagogy in teaching reading. Research and our own experiences have a lot to tell us about the impact of teachers' management, expectations, and attitudes toward learning on children's achievement and motivation. As you read the list of effective classroom management characteristics and interaction practices, think about how you exemplify these aspects of effective teaching.

Brief, Daily Lessons on Essential Emergent Literacy Activities

The EIR model, like other successful early intervention models, is built on research (see Taylor 2001). Emerging readers who start out a little behind need to experience success quickly, and EIR is structured to make this happen. Each week, two or three books are read several times for different purposes. This predictable structure provides consistency for struggling readers and helps build their confidence. During a daily 10- or 15-minute whole-group lesson and 10-minute follow-up lesson for students who are struggling, students:

- ▶ Become actively engaged
- ▶ Systematically learn about systematic phonemic awareness and phonics
- ▶ Develop concepts of print
- ▶ Learn comprehension strategies and increase their vocabulary
- ▶ Read and talk about simple texts
- ▶ Write about what they read
- ▶ Have their progress regularly monitored

Active Engagement

Throughout the whole-group session, students actively participate in multiple activities with several books that address different elements essential to learning to read (see Figure 1–2). The follow-up session is considered to be acceleration, not remediation, so that struggling readers do learn the emergent literacy abilities needed to become independent readers before they fall way behind.

Elements of Effective Pedagogy

Effective teachers skillfully coordinate many pedagogical aspects of their reading lessons. They make sure that they:

- ▶ Strike a good balance between whole-group and small-group instruction, using the form that best meets lesson objectives (Chorzempa and Graham 2006)
- ▶ Consider the purposes and timing of their lessons relative to their students' varying instructional needs
- ▶ Balance direct teaching (telling, leading) with differentiated support (coaching, providing feedback) (Connor et al. 2004; Pressley et al. 2003; Taylor et al. 2003)
- ▶ Foster students' active involvement in literacy activities to enhance their learning and motivation (Guthrie et al. 2000)
- ▶ Use challenging, motivating activities whether students are working with you, on their own, or with other students (Pressley et al. 2003)
- ▶ Maintain a balance between teaching reading skills and strategies directly and giving students opportunities to apply these skills and strategies by reading, listening to, writing about, and discussing engaging texts (Pressley 2006)
- ▶ Differentiate instruction and choose instructional materials based on students' abilities and interests (Pressley et al. 2007)
- ▶ Offer culturally responsive instruction: build on students' cultural strengths during student interactions and use multicultural literature to celebrate students' cultural heritages and introduce students to new cultural perspectives (Au 2006)
- ▶ Assess students' engagement, understanding, and behavior throughout the day (Pressley et al. 2003)
- ▶ Systematically collect and share a variety of formal and informal student assessment data—diagnostic, formative (as kids work), and summative (check whether students understand)—and use this information to make instructional decisions to improve student performance (Lipson et al. 2004; Taylor et al. 2000)

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Systematic Word Recognition Instruction

Your initial instructional focus is on developing phonemic awareness, teaching letter names and letter-sound recognition, and helping students write for sounds. You go on to emphasize tracking and sounding out words as students read simple texts. Some of your phonemic awareness and phonics instruction is provided through word work after students have read or listened to a story (see Figure 1–2; these activities are introduced in Chapter 3 and described in detail in Chapter 4).

Additional Motivating Pedagogical Practices

Effective teachers in the elementary grades:

- ▶ Maintain a positive classroom atmosphere and teach with enthusiasm for learning (Dolezal et al. 2003; Pressley et al. 2003)
- ▶ Expertly manage and organize their classrooms (Dolezal et al. 2003; Pressley 2001; Taylor, Pressley, and Pearson 2002)
- ▶ Encourage, praise, and give positive feedback (Pressley 2006)
- ▶ Have high expectations, let students know that effort leads to success, encourage independence and responsibility, and foster cooperative learning (Bohn et al. 2004; Dolezal et al. 2003; Guthrie et al. 2004; Hamre and Pianta 2005; Pressley et al. 2003)
- ▶ Collaborate with colleagues. While individual teachers can certainly improve their reading instruction and thus their students' reading, working with colleagues helps you be the most effective teacher you can be. (Choua, Stan, and Lena all believe that this collaboration piece is extremely instrumental to their success. As Stan says, "Professional learning within the school helps you see if you are on the right track, affirms what you are doing, and gives you ideas about what you should improve on.")

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Coaching in Word-Recognition Strategies

When children are reading simple texts at the end of the school year, you help them figure out words they don't instantly recognize by modeling, asking questions, and prompting. Typically, when a child is asked, "What do you do when you come to a word you don't know?" he answers, "Sound it out." That's one good strategy, but you want them to realize readers do other things when they come to words they don't recognize. As a coach, you need to prompt children to use a variety of word-recognition strategies, not overemphasize a single strategy, so they learn they have a repertoire of strategies to use to decode words. As Lena reads a leveled text about animal legs with a small group, she refers them to a chart of word-recognition strategies they can use, including looking at the picture, sounding it out, and looking for a chunk.

Coaching also helps children learn to monitor their word recognition—that is, correct on their own a word they've initially read incorrectly. Complimenting children for their attempts ("Good checking, how did you know to try that word again?") is an integral part of the instruction: both the praise and the question encourage children to be aware of the strategies they are using to make sense of the text. Students will begin to notice when words they say don't make sense in the context of the story or don't look like the word they are trying to read. Part of self-monitoring is learning to cross-check—to be sure that a

EIR PHONEMIC AWARENESS AND PHONICS ACTIVITIES THAT HELP STUDENTS LEARN TO READ

Guided Writing for Sounds

After listening to a story or informational book, you and the children together write a sentence about the story. After listening to *Jump, Frog, Jump* (Kalan 1981), students might help you write, "The frog jumped away." At first you model writing the sounds you hear in the words with students' help. Later, students write a group or individual sentence by themselves with your support. After listening to *Just Grandpa and Me* (Mayer 1985) in the spring, students might all write, "He went to the store." (Video 7 on the DVD shows a teacher coaching her students as they each write this sentence on a whiteboard.) By trying to turn the sounds they use to communicate an idea about the story into letters and words, children refine their phonemic awareness, develop their understanding of the alphabetic principle, and learn letter-sound correspondence.

Elkonin Sound Boxes

This activity develops phonemic awareness as well as letter-name knowledge, letter-sound knowledge, and the ability to decode sequentially letter-by-letter. Children listen for sounds in the words used in the stories they are reading and write the letters for these sounds in a string of boxes. For example, if a story is about a hen, you would ask students to listen for the sounds in the word *hen*, and, as they say the word, write *h* in the first box, *e* in the second, and *n* in the third.

Creating Word Families

After about three months, you and your students begin writing words that belong to the same family as a word used in a story (Cunningham 2009). For example, after reading "A caterpillar will become a moth or a butterfly, but first it needs to grow and change," you and your students might write *but* on whiteboards, then write *cut* and *nut*, and talk about how these words all have the *-ut* ending.

word not only looks like the word on the page but also makes sense in the story, and vice versa. Lena asks students reading the text about animal legs, "How do you know this word is *beetle*, not *bug*? They say that the word has *ee* "for long *e*" in it and is too long to be *bug*.

Concepts of Print

Even though many kindergartners will not be able to track print on their own, you should model this frequently during the year. As you read sentences from stories that you have put on the board or on a chart (or, in the spring, as students read short books and summaries), model tracking and reading from left to right and from one line of text to the next. Also, as the students and you write sentences interactively, focus on leaving spaces between words, writing from

left to right, using punctuation, and so on. Students can practice tracking as they reread the sentence you've written together.

Comprehension and Vocabulary Instruction

To send the message that meaning is what reading is all about, discuss the meanings of potentially unfamiliar words you come across in texts. You should also ask questions about the stories students read, questions that expand their comprehension of the story, stretch their thinking, prompt them to relate the story to their lives, or involve them in summarizing. As students answer these questions, coach them to elaborate on their ideas. Since there is a lot to cover in the 10- or 15-minute lesson, you won't be able to give every child a chance to answer a question every day. However, during the week you're focusing on a story, you should be able to give all children a chance to answer one of your questions.

Small-Group Follow-Up Practice

Every day you'll meet for 10 minutes with the students who are struggling the most with literacy and review what you covered in the whole-group lesson. As these children practice the same emergent reading skills and answer the same comprehension questions with your support in a small group, they typically experience greater success.

Regular Monitoring of Progress

Regular monitoring of students' progress is a hallmark of effective teachers and schools (Lipson et al. 2004; Pressley et al. 2003; Taylor et al. 2000). Using a checklist of essential beginning reading skills, you'll assess your students' reading abilities frequently so you'll know when to fine-tune your instruction. You may need to provide more help or give them more responsibility in order to accelerate their reading growth. Children who know most of the letter names and sounds and can segment and blend the sounds in three- and four-phoneme words by the end of kindergarten are making good progress in learning to read (Taylor 2011b). (See Chapter 5 for more information on assessment.)

How the EIR Model Fits Within a Balanced Literacy Block

Let's look at how you might fit EIR lessons into a 110- to 120-minute daily block of reading instruction during a full day of kindergarten (or a 90-minute block during a half-day program).

A Sample Schedule

Choua Zhang has a 120-minute reading block. She spends about 25 minutes a day on a whole-group lesson from the school's core reading program and

Reading Block: Choua's Sample Schedule

9:00–9:25 Whole-Group Lesson

- ▶ Use a selection from a basal reader or trade book
- ▶ Target a comprehension skill or strategy
- ▶ Teach vocabulary at point of contact in the selection
- ▶ Pose and discuss answers to high-level questions
- ▶ Review learning activities for independent work time

9:30–10:30 Independent and Small-Group Work

Independent Work: While I work with small groups of students, the other students work independently or with a partner or small group on challenging and differentiated materials. (See Chapter 6 for a more in-depth discussion of independent work activities.) Students might:

- ▶ Work with me on words encountered in their guided reading group lesson
- ▶ Write and draw in a journal or on open-ended response sheets about what they have read
- ▶ Listen to a story on tape and talk with others about what they have read
- ▶ Write down new or interesting vocabulary and possible word meanings
- ▶ Read/reread books in their book baskets or book bags

Small Group 1 (9:30–9:45)

Using a story at students' reading level, I:

- ▶ Provide phonemic awareness and phonics instruction as needed
- ▶ Coach students in word-recognition strategies as they read the story
- ▶ Discuss vocabulary at point of contact in the story
- ▶ Provide follow-up instruction to the comprehension skill/strategy targeted in the whole-group lesson
- ▶ Pose and discuss answers to high-level questions about the story

Small Group 2 (9:50–10:05)

Follow same strategies as small-group 1.

Small Group 3 (10:10–10:25)

Follow same strategies as small-group 1.

10:30–10:45 EIR Whole-Group Lesson

Follow EIR strategies.

10:50–11:00 EIR Small-Group Follow-Up Work

Reinforce EIR strategies. (These students were also in small group 1, 2, or 3.)

15 minutes on an EIR whole-group lesson. She spends about an hour a day on three guided reading groups and 10 minutes on one EIR small-group follow-up lesson (the second dose of quality small-group instruction she gives her students who need more support). See the previous page for an example of her schedule.

In the next chapter, three teachers share how the content and pedagogy of effective reading instruction—and the principles of EIR—come alive in their whole-group and small-group lessons. Chapters 3 and 4 look at excellent reading instruction through the lens of these EIR lessons. Chapter 6 discusses effective techniques for managing the reading block of instruction, including EIR lessons and independent work activities.

DISCUSS WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES

1. Discuss the stages of word recognition and describe the process of learning to read.
2. Share your current understandings about teaching reading. What was striking in this chapter? What changed your thinking?
3. When you consider implementing EIR, what are the challenges? What support systems are already in place in your school to lean on (parent volunteer programs, PTO, etc.)?

